

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. An identifier indicating the status of each claim is provided.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended)                      A contents control method for managing usage of contents, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving contents and content usage rights information from a contents distribution server ~~in response to a user request~~ at a memory storage device remote from ~~the~~ a user;

storing the contents and contents usage rights information on the memory storage device remote from the user;

comparing content usage rights information with status code information, the status code information showing the usage status of contents stored on the memory storage device;

wherein said content usage rights information contains a user's rights to use the contents stored on the memory storage device for a predetermined number of times, a predetermined end date/time showing the usable end time until which said contents can be used, a time period showing both a start date/time and an end date time over which the contents can be used, and a usage time showing an amount of time for which the content can be used;

determining whether the contents are used within the range set by said content usage rights information;

comparing said status code information with output setting information having a threshold value within the range of said contents usage rights information to warn by warning

report data when in proximity to said contents usage rights in the case where said status code information is within the range of said contents usage rights information,

wherein said warning report data alerts a user that a usage limit of said content, as restricted by the content usage rights information, is near;

sending said warning report data to a report address using an electronic mail or displaying said warning report on a screen connected to the memory storage device when said status code information nears the threshold value of said output setting ~~information;~~information, wherein a selection of using an electronic mail or displaying the warning report on the screen is determined based on a predetermined report method in the output setting information;

disabling use of the contents stored on the memory storage device when said status code information exceeds the threshold value of said output setting information; and

deleting the contents stored on the memory storage device after a period of elapsed time for deletion has elapsed.

2. (Previously Presented)                      A contents control method according to claim 1,  
further comprising

outputting invalidation report data when the use of said contents has been disabled.

3. (Previously Presented)                      A contents control method according to claim 2,  
further comprising

outputting deletion report data when said contents are deleted.

4. - 5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Presented)                      A contents control method according to claim 3,  
further comprising  
    sending said invalidation report data and said deletion report data to said report address  
using an electronic mail.

7. (Currently Amended)                      A contents control device for managing usage of  
contents, said device comprising:  
    first receiving means for receiving contents and content usage rights information from a  
contents distribution server ~~in response to a user request~~ at a memory storage device remote from  
~~the a~~ user;  
    second receiving means for automatically receiving key code information associated with  
the contents from the contents distribution server, wherein the key code information includes  
information for decoding the contents and contents usage rights information;  
    memory storage means for storing said contents, key code information, and status code  
information showing the usage status of said contents, and output setting information having a  
threshold value within the range of contents usage rights information for warning by warning  
report data when in proximity to said threshold value of said contents usage rights,  
    wherein said content usage rights information contains a user's rights to use the contents  
stored on the contents distribution server for a predetermined number of times, a predetermined  
end date/time showing the usable end time until which said contents can be used, a time period

showing both a start date/time and an end date time over which the contents can be used, and a usage time showing an amount of time for which the content can be used;

wherein said warning report data alerts a user that a usage limit of said content, as restricted by the content usage rights information, is near;

key code monitor means for controlling usage limits of said contents by comparing said contents usage rights, said status code information and said output setting information to determine whether the contents are used within the range set by said content usage rights information, said key code monitor means comprising a function to send said warning report data to a report address using an electronic mail or displaying said warning report on a screen connected to the memory storage device when said status code information nears the threshold value of said output setting ~~information;~~information, wherein a selection of using an electronic mail or displaying the warning report on the screen is determined based on a predetermined report method in the output setting information;

content output means containing a function for reproducing said contents of said memory storage means and a function to output said warning report data;

disabling means for disabling use of the contents stored on the memory storage means when said status code information exceeds the threshold value of said output setting information; and

deleting means for deleting the contents stored on the memory storage means after a period of elapsed time for deletion has elapsed.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A contents control apparatus for managing usage of contents, said apparatus comprising:

first comparison means for comparing content usage rights information with status code information showing the usage status of contents stored on a memory storage device;

wherein the contents and content usage rights information are received from a contents distribution server ~~in response to a user request~~ at a memory storage device remote from ~~the a~~ user,

wherein said content usage rights information contains a user's rights to use the contents stored on the memory storage device for a predetermined number of times, a predetermined end date/time showing the usable end time until which said contents can be used, a time period showing both a start date/time and an end date time over which the contents can be used, and a usage time showing an amount of time for which the content can be used;

determining means for determining whether the contents are used within the range set by said content usage rights information;

second comparison means for comparing said status code information with output setting information having a threshold value within the range of said contents usage rights information to warn by warning report data when in proximity to said contents usage rights in the case where said status code information is within the range of said contents usage rights information,

wherein said warning report data alerts a user that a usage limit of said content, as restricted by the content usage rights information, is near;

output means for sending said warning report data to a report address using an electronic mail or displaying said warning report on a screen connected to the memory storage device when said status code information nears the threshold value of said output setting

~~information;~~information, wherein a selection of using an electronic mail or displaying the warning report on the screen is determined based on a predetermined report method in the output setting information;

disabling means for disabling use of the contents on the memory storage device when said status code information exceeds the threshold value of said output setting information; and

deleting means for deleting the contents on the memory storage device after a period of elapsed time for deletion has elapsed.

10. (Currently Amended)                   A computer-readable medium storing a computer program that when executed on a processor implements a contents control method for managing usage of contents, said method comprising:

receiving contents and content usage rights information from a contents distribution server ~~in response to a user request~~ at a memory storage device remote from ~~the~~a user;

storing the contents and content usage rights information on the memory storage device remote from the user;

comparing content usage rights information with status code information, the status code information showing the usage status of contents stored on the memory storage device;

wherein said content usage rights information contains a user's rights to use the contents stored on the memory storage device for a predetermined number of times, a predetermined end date/time showing the usable end time until which said contents can be used, a time period showing both a start date/time and an end date time over which the contents can be used, and a usage time showing an amount of time for which the content can be used;

determining whether the contents are used within the range set by said content usage rights information;

comparing said status code information with output setting information having a threshold value within the range of said contents usage rights information to warn by warning report data when in proximity to said contents usage rights in the case where said status code information is within the range of said contents usage rights information,

wherein said warning report data alerts a user that a usage limit of said content, as restricted by the content usage rights information, is near;

sending said warning report data to a report address using an electronic mail or displaying said warning report on a screen connected to the memory storage device when said status code information nears the threshold value of said output setting ~~information;~~information, wherein a selection of using an electronic mail or displaying the warning report on the screen is determined based on a predetermined report method in the output setting information;

disabling use of the contents stored on the memory storage device when said status code information exceeds the threshold value of said output setting information; and

deleting the contents stored on the memory storage device after a period of elapsed time for deletion has elapsed.